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ALPHABETS OLD AND NEW

lays down two conditions on which the artist may be permitted to tamper with the alphabet: Whatever he does ought, in the first place, to make reading run smoother; and, in the second, to make writing satisfactory to the eye. The way to make reading easier is to mark whatever is characteristic in the letter; to develop what is peculiar to it; to curtail, or it may be to lop off, anything which tends to make us confound it with another; to emphasize, in short, the individuality of each individual letter and make it unmistakable. At the same time there is no reason why reading should not be made pleasant as well as easy. Beauty, that is to say, is worth bearing in mind. It must not, of course, interfere with use; but there is not the least reason why it should. Beauty does not imply elaboration or ornament.

Naturally, what Mr. Day has to say of inventiveness is mainly of a negative character. "It is of no use trying to evolve brand-new alphabets out of your inner consciousness. Originality is what we all desire; but it is scarcely the thing to seek consciously, least of all in lettering; it comes of its own accord if ever it comes. We are original or we are not."

Quite a large number of the 178 plates consist of modern examples more or less closely related to older forms, but some displaying a freshness of invention not always to be accepted readily. However, it must be remembered that an alphabet, as such, shows the letters least advantageously. It is when they are combined into words and considered in relation to their space or accompanying ornament, and also to the material and method of execution, that a fair judgment can be formed of them. In this last particular the book is of specially practical value to the designer. It invites attention to the variations of form resulting from the tool employed and the material used—points much too often overlooked. For this and many other reasons the book is one that the designer will be glad to have near him for reference and inspiration.

COMPANIONS FOR THE COUNTRY.

At this season of the year, when townfolk are seeking the country and country folk are best repaid for their banishment from town, it is not amiss to draw attention to a few books which will add to the keen enjoyment of coun-

try life. How much the love of flowers is stimulated by a little knowledge of them! It is one of those cases where a little knowledge is not dangerous. The ordinary wayfarer has neither the time nor the capacity for an exhaustive study of botany. What he needs is information sufficiently scientific to be thorough as far as it goes, and yet simple and attractive; a book that will be a companion for his leisure instead of a further taskmaster upon his time. If such a book is one that an intelligent child also can consult, extracting from it just so much as she is capable of assimilating, even if it be only the name of the flower that she has delighted to gather, then it seems to admirably fulfil its purpose of being a family *vade mecum* for the holidays.

A GUIDE TO THE WILD FLOWERS, by ALICE LOUNSBERRY, illustrated by Mrs. ELLIS ROWAN (F. A. Stokes Company: New York), seems to satisfy these conditions. It opens with "A Chapter to Study," in which the author has collected and explained the terms used to describe the organs of a plant. In this way the necessary "little knowledge" is made most easily and expeditiously procurable. Then follows a brief chapter on "Five Conspicuous Plant Families." In the body of the book the plants are grouped according to their environment: for example, under the heading of "Plants Growing in Water," "Plants Growing in Mud," and so on. Then, besides an index of English names and one of Latin, there is an index of color, which makes the book very easy for reference, even to one who is entirely ignorant of the subject. The student is still further assisted by sixty-four colored and one hundred black and white plates, as well as by fifty-four diagrams. This is Mrs. Rowan's share of the work, and most admirably it has been accomplished. For the way in which her drawings have been reproduced and for the general make-up of this handsome volume the publishers must be highly commended.

FIELD, FOREST AND WAYSIDE FLOWERS, with Chapters on Grasses, Sedges and Ferns, by MAUD GOING (The Baker & Taylor Company, New York).

"The chapters of this book are so arranged as to follow the waxing and waning of plant-life during an average season in the North-eastern United States. It is intended more

BOOKS FOR THE COUNTRY

especially for people who have not time, or, perhaps, inclination, to become actual students, who have not familiarized themselves with botanic nomenclature and technical terms, and who yet love to observe the beauties and the wonders of familiar plant-life." So writes the author in her "Foreword"; and in the following chapters thoroughly realizes her intentions.

The charm of this book is that it reveals so much of the romance of nature. It opens the heedless eye to the thousand and one phenomena which ordinarily escape notice, and invests them with an intimate interest that must go a long way towards making the reader a real student. The drawings are calculated to stimulate the reader's zest for the book as well as to illustrate the text. There is also a beautiful series of photographic studies of flowers, which, apart from their immediate value in connection with the book, will suggest a very delightful field for the amateur photographer.

HOW TO KNOW THE FERNS: A Guide to the Names, Haunts and Habits of Our Common Ferns, by FRANCES THEODORE PARSONS. Illustrated by MARION SATTERLEE and ALICE JOSEPHINE SMITH (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York).

Owing to the comparatively small number of species it is possible to become familiar with a large proportion of our native ferns during a single summer. "On an ordinary walk of an hour or two," says the author, "the would-be fern student can familiarize himself with anywhere from ten to fifteen of the ferns described in this book. During a summer holiday in an average locality he should learn to know by sight and by name from twenty-five to thirty ferns, while in a really good neighborhood the enthusiast who is willing to scour the surrounding country from the tops of the highest mountains to the depths of the wildest ravines may hope to extend his list into the forties." The book opens with chapters on "When and Where to Find Ferns," "Explanation of Terms," "Fertilization, Development and Fructification," and "Notable Fern Families," and after hints as to how to use the guide treats in detail of fifty-seven ferns, ranged under six groups. There is everything here to make one wish to study ferns and to help one to do it intelligently and agreeably. The drawings are excellent.

EVERYDAY BUTTERFLIES: A Group of Biographies, by SAMUEL HUBBARD SCUDDER; with Seventy-one Illustrations, Plain and Colored (Houghton, Mifflin & Company).

The object of this book is to relate the story of the sometimes simple, sometimes curiously complex lives of our very commonest butterflies, those which every rambler at all observant sees about him at one time or another. The sequence of the stories, in a general way, corresponds with the order of the seasons.

Mr. Scudder is well known by previous writings as an authority upon butterflies, and in this latest book has condensed a great amount of knowledge and set it forth in a simple and attractive form for the benefit of the unlearned. The admirable plates enable one to immediately identify the species, and the text is happily adjusted to the intelligence both of young people and of their elders.

THE FIRST BOOK OF BIRDS, by OLIVE THOME MILLER; with Eight Colored Plates and Twelve Plain Plates and Twenty Figures in the Text (Houghton, Mifflin & Company).

The writer points out that this book does not concern itself with the science of ornithology, but with the life and habits of birds, and is intended to arouse sympathy and interest in the living bird, neither as a target nor as a producer of eggs, but as a fellow creature whose acquaintance it would be pleasant to make. It has grown out of her "Children's Talks," given to scholars, ranging from the kindergarten stage to the age of sixteen. To say that she has succeeded in her purpose is only giving faint praise to this charming little book. It is really one of those which should be introduced to every child.

ON THE BIRDS' HIGHWAY, by REGINALD HEBER HOWE, JR.; with Photographic Illustrations by the Author and a Frontispiece in Color from a Painting by Louis Agassiz Fuertes (Small, Maynard & Company, Boston).

This dainty little volume is one of those creditable bits of book making which this firm of publishers is so successful in producing. Some of the chapters have already appeared in the Boston *Commonwealth* and *Transcript*. They are saturated with the love of nature; enthusiastic chats with fellow lovers, not only of the birds, but of the dunes and hills and waters which they haunt.